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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PE](#)  
SUBJECT: GOP WINS BATTLE AGAINST RADICAL TEACHER,S UNION  
  
REF: LIMA 33

Sensitive But Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: More than 60 per cent of teachers nationwide took the government-mandated competency test, handing the GOP a victory in its showdown against the powerful and radical union SUTEP. In some provinces outside Lima SUTEP members bullied test-takers and physically blocked access to testing centers. After the exam, the GOP reduced by 90 percent government supported union positions and eliminated the automatic paycheck deduction that supports a union controlled social fund. SUTEP said it would challenge the personnel cuts in international fora, which is ironic for a group more committed to a defunct radicalism than to representing the teachers and improving the education system.  
End Summary.

Competency test - 60 percent of teachers turn out  
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¶2. (U) The GOP held firm on administering the January 8 compulsory teacher competency test (Ref A). The Unified Syndicate of Educational Workers of Peru (SUTEP) rejected the test but officially left the decision to participate up to individuals. Education Ministry officials estimated 60 percent of teachers nationwide took the test, 70 percent in Lima, while SUTEP Secretary General Caridad Montes said only 20 percent of teachers had taken the exam. Education Minister Jose Antonio Chang said teachers who were not able to test would have an opportunity for a make-up exam on January 22. Based on the test results, Chang said the ministry would invest 30 million USD in a teacher training program.

¶3. (U) In Lima, SUTEP held marches which at times disrupted traffic. In some provinces outside Lima, SUTEP associated violence led to high absenteeism. In Junin, Puno and Huancavelica departments, SUTEP members physically prevented teachers from entering test sites by blocking access, throwing objects at participating teachers, and in one case taking over a building. In Huaraz, the capital of Ancash department, police used tear gas to control SUTEP demonstrators.

Teacher's Union takes some hits  
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¶4. (SBU) On 1/9 the GOP published a decree to reduce from 314 to 30 the number of SUTEP representatives who only perform union functions but still draw government teacher salaries. On 1/12 the GOP followed up with another decree eliminating the automatic salary deduction that goes to a teacher social fund, the "Derrama Magisterial" which is largely controlled

by SUTEP. (Note: According to Oscar Muro of the local chapter of the AFL-CIO, the fund sometimes aids teachers in need but is often misused. He further said that 30 subsidized representatives was a generous number given that no other union in the country has such a high number of positions as a percentage of membership. End Note.) Chang said the staff reductions would save more than 1 million USD per year. In the press, President Garcia referred to the union reps that did not teach as "lazy scoundrels." The cuts will occur through attrition and non-renewal of licenses; those affected, if qualified, could sign up to be teachers. In response, SUTEP charged that the government was punishing the union for opposing the exam and said it would appeal the decisions to international authorities like the International Labor Organization (ILO).

SUTEP - a hijacked labor union

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15. (SBU) SUTEP is a vehicle for radical leadership rooted in the Maoist wing of the Peruvian Communist Party, Patria Roja (Red Fatherland) (ref). According to labor experts, SUTEP is controlled by a political faction only marginally focused on the best interests of teachers, let alone education, and regional branches of the union are often even more radical than the central leadership. Patria Roja took control of the union in 1978 and has retained control by employing an undemocratic, indirect system of election. (On January 16, SUTEP issued a press release announcing a nationwide strike to oppose the GOP pilot program and "neoliberal proposal imposed by the World Bank" to transfer school management from the central government to municipalities and schools.)

Comment

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16. (SBU) The government efforts to rein in SUTEP and its radical, anti-democratic tendencies and to reduce its out-dated and excessive state subsidies, have been welcomed by most Peruvians. SUTEP's attempts to portray GOP efforts as "union-busting" are ironic given the group's autocratic ways, its commitment to a defunct communist ideology, and its apparent indifference to the interests of teachers, specifically, and education in general. End Comment.  
POWERS